



Department of Human Services

Dear Stakeholder,

Even as the state continues its recovery from Superstorm Sandy, we're reminded that a new hurricane season is upon us. In fact, this week marks Hurricane Preparedness Week and June is National Safety Month. It's a good time to consider your personal and professional readiness for any emergency, but particularly for a natural disaster.

Tropical Storm Irene in August 2011 was a wake-up call. It forced us to reevaluate our emergency plans both at home and at work. Like remembering to change the batteries in smoke alarms, it's important to update and review the checklists to make sure that everyone involved is clear on their role and prepared. For seniors or people with disabilities, there are even more readiness issues to consider: evacuation, transportation, caregiving, food and medication.

A great source for emergency preparedness is www.ready.nj.gov. It helps families and businesses to [make a plan, build a kit](#) and stay informed of imminent and dangerous situations. Another great resource is [NJ211](#) – a one stop website or call center for emergency evacuations, shelter locations, food distribution and FEMA or state recovery resources.

I'm sure you've all seen the dramatic progress for some boardwalks and businesses down the shore. Governor Chris Christie recently participated in a Guinness Book of World Record ribbon-cutting in Seaside Heights, and toured along the coast with President Obama.

As the Governor has said, though, that there is still a lot to be done, which is why last week the Department of Community Affairs launched the "[reNew Jersey Stronger](#)" housing assistance initiative that makes grants available to homeowners impacted by the storm.

The grants are designed to encourage homeowners to resettle and help them reconstruct, rehabilitate, elevate and mitigate their homes. Homeowners whose primary residences were damaged by the storm in the nine most-impacted counties (Atlantic, Bergen, Cape May, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, and Union) are encouraged to apply.

This month we'll be visiting some of our contracted agencies to highlight what they've been doing post-Sandy to recover and to be prepared for the next storm. If any of you have interesting stories of applying lessons learned from Superstorm Sandy to the operations of your agency or organization, please email [Nicole Brossoie](#) on my staff to see if we can schedule a visit.

In other news, I announced during my budget testimony a couple of notable retirements at the Department. Retirements are always bitter-sweet. We're fortunate to have benefited for so many years from the skill and expertise of these dedicated leaders but we also understand and appreciate their desire to begin new chapters in their lives.

Frederick S. Cohen, Assistant Commissioner of the Office of Legal, Regulatory and Guardianship Services since 2007 retired last month. Previous to his appointment at DHS, he was Executive Director and then Assistant Commissioner of the Legal and Regulatory Unit at the Department of Labor, Deputy Attorney General with the Division of Criminal Justice and an Assistant Attorney in New York where he was both an appellate and trial attorney with an emphasis on federal civil rights-related litigation.

Vito J. DeSantis, Executive Director of CBVI also retired at the end of May after nearly 30 years of state service. He joined the staff of the Commission in 1984 and served in various roles before being named Director in September 2002. The Department has launched a nationwide search for interested and qualified candidates.

And, Kathy Mason, Director of the Division of Aging Services, retired in May after 34 years of service with the state. She began her career at the Department of Human Services in 1979 as an Income Maintenance Technician and has since held 11 titles in this Department and the Department of Health. For the last 27 years, her focus was developing successful program services for the Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled (PAAD),

Lifeline, Senior Gold and Hearing Aid Assistance to the Aged and Disabled (HAAAD) programs.

We wish them health, happiness and longevity in the next chapter of their lives.

Regards,

Jennifer Velez